

Morgantown Green Team: Minutes of the September 14, 2015 Meeting

Attending: Lisa (Lagana) Jones (Chair), Amanda Stoner (Recycling Intern), Trevor Lloyd (Recycling Committee), Jenny Selin (City Council), Jim Kotcon (Energy Committee), and Pam Cubberly (Green Nights and Green Morgantown). **Guests:** Doug and Amy Milbrand.

I. Old Business

Urban agriculture. Jim Kotcon drafted, sent, and presented a letter (attached) from the Green Team at the September 15th City Council meeting regarding the team's views on changes proposed to the General Offenses Code related to urban agriculture. The City Council later decided to send the proposed changes back for city staff for further work to remove changes in the GOC more appropriate under planning and zoning and so that any city code/ordinances relating to urban agriculture would work together to encourage reasonable practice by city residents of urban agriculture while minimizing impacts on neighbors.

II. New Business

A. Recycling Mini-Green Team Meeting. Amanda Stoner had requested a short pre-Green Team meeting on her efforts as the city's recycling intern to move forward on steps based on her research last year on opportunities to improve and expand on existing recycling in the city and, as possible, in the wider Morgantown area. She first noted that she had contacted a number of folks in the city, county, and university about speaking at the beginning of the team-sponsored community forum on recycling, now scheduled for Tuesday, November 10. Pam Cubberly emphasized the need for a strong facilitator at the November 10 forum to keep it focused on problem solving, rather than just complaints. It was also possible that complaints about the lack of recycling in the county might dominate the meeting, which was intended to focus mainly on challenges in the City's single-stream recycling program.

The team then discussed several issues:

Republic Services representation at the forum. Jeffry Hays said he and his team would be unable to attend the recycling community forum on November 10 due to a conflict with a meeting in Cleveland for him and his "team." Changing the date of the event would not be desirable, as so much publicity had already gone out on the dates of the three community forums; but all agreed that holding the forum without the key representation of Republic Services would diminish the effort significantly. Pam Cubberly noted that a decision must be made no later than Tuesday, October 27, particularly if a new date was chosen so publicity on a new date could reach as many people as possible.

Given the importance of having representation from Republic Services for any meaningful dialogue or workable solutions to problems raised, the team discussed options. These included contacting other staff at Republic, changing the date to an evening Republic Services had staff available, and finding anyone else who could represent Republic's view, perhaps a city staff person.

The team asked and Jenny Selin agreed to contact people she knew at Republic in order to find someone, even from higher up in Pittsburgh, to attend. In the meanwhile, Amanda Stoner would continue to contact Republic to see if any other options on representation could be found and, if not, what

nights Republic staff would be free in November. Tom Arnold was mentioned as a city employee that was most familiar with the challenges that Republic Services has faced in single-stream recycling.

City liaison for Green Team and for Recycling Intern. Trevor noted that the city had not yet hired someone to replace him as city engineer, as liaison with the Green Team, and as Amanda Stoner's contact as the City Recycling Intern. Any new city engineer would be tasked with all three roles. In the meantime, Jim Kotcon and Trevor Lloyd will work with Amanda as their time permits to move efforts forward on recycling. It was agreed that a meeting with Jeff Mikorski was needed in order to address the lack of someone in these roles. Any new liaison should also advertise for a new recycling intern to start in January, overlapping with Amanda for her last semester before traveling to Senegal next year.

Other efforts by Amanda Stoner on recycling this fall. All agreed that Amanda with team support should build on her report to City Council last June through specific steps, particularly to address the widespread "contamination" of materials placed in recycling bins. Opportunities exist, based on successful models elsewhere in public education and incentive programs, for example, Recycle Banks that reward citizens for proper recycling and/or correct answers on online recycling quizzes. All agreed that the basic step of putting stickers on all recycling bins making clear what was and was not appropriate to place in the bin was essential. The team briefly discussed the value of an intensive and comprehensive media campaign over a period of months to educate citizens on the key role they play in making single-stream recycling work. Doug Milbrand mentioned he had a contact with a Cheat Lake magazine that might accept an article on the subject. Other contacts exist in various media who might join in on the effort.

Another step might be drafting a "white paper" for the City on policy changes that the City could make to both encourage proper recycling including developing and enforcing a strong city ordinance on recycling.

Action: Jenny Selin will pursue her contacts at Republic Services to get a representative to the Nov. 10 forum. Amanda will also contact Republic on sending a representative as well as finding out what nights in November one of its staff might be free, should we change the date of the forum. Lisa Jones will contact Jeff Mikorski to set up a meeting along with Amanda, Jim, and/or Trevor on opportunities to improve recycling through public education and city ordinances and finding a city liaison for the Green Team and for Amanda.

- B. Sustainable Morgantown Initiative.** Joey James was called out of town and will report on progress at the November 2 Green Team meeting.
- C. Morgantown Solar Co-op.** Pam Cubberly briefly reported on the success of the September 24 Info Meeting at the library, which attracted at least 20 new people interested in knowing more about the co-op. The deadline for application on September 30 has passed. Contracts are being signed as homeowners work out the details with the contractor Mountain View Solar. We will know more later in the fall about the final number of households that actually install panels this year. There may possibly be an opportunity for an additional solar co-op next year if a minimum of 20 households were accepted in the co-op (to be confirmed), but the deadline for signing of contracts will be much earlier—June

30—so households will have sufficient time to get everything needed done to obtain the benefit of the Federal tax credit, due to expire at the end of 2016.

- D. **“Air, Water, and Waste: Where Is Morgantown Heading?”** Pam Cubberly reported on progress on this fall series of community forums on three environmental topics. Strong efforts on publicity were now key to the success of these forums, all of which involve reports on the status of air quality, water quality, and waste disposal / recycling in Morgantown and surrounding areas. The first forum on air quality was scheduled for Thursday (October 8) that week. She urged everyone to post the publicity flyers wherever they could. Jenny Selin, complimenting the team on the effort, took a number of them to encourage City Council members to attend. As noted above, everyone agreed that the third forum’s success rested on the presence of a representative from Republic Services, so its point of view on the problems and challenges of single-stream recycling could be addressed.
- E. **Green Drinks Morgantown.** Although this is not an activity of the Green Team, one of its members Joey James has taken on organizing these monthly gatherings for the area’s environmental community. Pam Cubberly helped on this first one for the fall, publicizing it as a night for newcomers to the Morgantown area. However, it appeared there were too many other activities that night in town as only about 10 people attended, mostly from area green groups.
- F. **Proposed development bordering South Park/Hills.** Jim Kotcon briefly described a proposed massive development project in the South Park / South Hills area bordering city land that could have large impacts on both traffic and open space. Jenny Selin noted that the homes would be in the range of half a million dollars each. The developers already own the land involved. There was little that the city could do about this development given its location outside the city boundaries. That said, some team members wondered if area residents could at least influence the developers to take a more sustainable/green approach to a development that would absorb an area of what is now green space. This might be a good project for the Sierra Club.
- G. **Urban agriculture ordinance revision.** Jim Kotcon reported on the September 15 council meeting and asked Jenny Selin if she could keep the team informed on any new version that city staff come up with, whether involving the General Offenses Code or Planning and Zoning.

Action: Jenny Selin will keep the Green Team informed on developments by City staff and council so the Green Team can make timely input.

III. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at about 6:30pm. Minutes submitted by Pam Cubberly, October 6, 2015.

Next meeting: November 2, 5:30pm to 7:00pm, in City Council Chambers at 389 Spruce Street.

Attachment: Letter from Green Team to City Council, September 15, 2015

Sept. 14, 2015

To Morgantown City Council
From: Morgantown Green team

RE: Urban Agriculture Ordinance

The Morgantown Green Team has been extensively involved with review and study of a proposed urban agriculture ordinance since it was first proposed last year. We have reviewed the proposed ordinance under consideration tonight and are concerned that, in order to appease a few vocal opponents, the latest draft has lost sight of the original intent and beneficial purposes for which the ordinance was first proposed.

We compared the draft under consideration tonight with the earlier drafts, in particular the most recent previous draft discussed at the Committee of the Whole meeting, August 25.

- 1) The first Whereas section of the earlier draft indicated that the City “is committed to increasing access to fresh, locally grown, wholesome foods for all residents”. Although no one ever spoke against such a provision, that section was struck in the current draft, suggesting that the City is no longer committed to that goal.
- 2) The second Whereas of the earlier draft stated that “the City seeks to create and encourage programs and policies that sustain greater local food security and improve access to healthy foods in underserved neighborhoods”, that section has also been struck. Does this mean the City no longer supports health food in underserved communities?
- 3) The third Whereas stated that “urban agriculture contributes to the local economy by generating living-wage jobs...etc.” That section was struck. Is the City no longer interested in generating jobs?
- 4) Likewise, all of the other policy intentions to promote urban agriculture have been struck, even though no citizens have ever spoken against any of them.
- 5) The Green Team recognizes that these “Whereas” sections merely state the City’s intent and may not be legally binding, but this draft also strikes out all of the definitions of commercial agriculture, aquaponics, community gardens, and also strikes the zoning changes to allow and encourage these land uses, even though no resident has ever spoken against these provisions. Were this draft to be adopted, it would appear that Council unambiguously opposes policies and practices designed to promote urban agriculture activities, even those are activities that no resident has ever opposed.

In conclusion, the Morgantown Green Team supports the original intent of the urban agriculture ordinance to promote wholesome, locally grown food, to encourage opportunities for resident entrepreneurship, to reduce the negative impact of vacant lots and under-utilized properties, to enhance the educational opportunities for students, and to assist low-income and under-served residents to supplement the family food budget and create food-related small businesses. The draft under consideration tonight does not encourage any of these, and instead retreats from the support for urban agriculture that so many communities across America are pursuing. We sincerely hope that this was not the intent of the majority of Council, and we urge Council to return to the principles that guided the August 25 draft and the direction Council set that night.

Sincerely,

Pamela Cubberly, Jim Kotcon, Ella Belling, Joey James, Morgantown Green Team